The Melville Society NEWSLETTER

SPRING, 1954

Volume X Number 1

Mailed with the present issue of the Newsletter is *Word Study* for December, 1953, which contains on pp. 7-8 the article by C. Merton Babcock, "Melville's 'Moby Dictionary.'" At the request of the secretary, copies of this interesting article were supplied free of charge by the G. & C. Merriam Company.

ABSTRACTS OF DISSERTATIONS

Recently the Executive Committee approved the expenditure of an amount not to exceed thirty dollars to subsidize publication of *Doctoral Dissertations on Herman Melville: A Chronological Summary*, compiled by the secretary of the Society. This booklet of thirty-nine pages, listing all Melville dissertations completed in American universities and supplying descriptive information about each one, has been mailed within the past month to our active members. Additional copies may be obtained by sending fifty cents in cash or stamps.

One or two copies of the booklet have turned up with missing pages. Some of these may have been sent out. Any member who has received an imperfect copy may secure a replacement by notifying the secretary.

CHICAGO MEETING

The 1953 annual meeting was held as scheduled at the Palmer House, Chicago, on December 30. Since neither the president nor the secretary was able to be present, and since Walter E. Bezanson (who was to have presided in place of President Sealts) found himself assigned to the task of reading a paper in another meeting at the same hour, Howard P. Vincent kindly consented to conduct the meeting. A small group of about twenty members attended.

After short papers by Carvel Collins (on Melville's use of Polynesian names) and Laurence N. Barrett (on Melville as poet), a discussion of Melville's poetry was led off by William Bysshe Stein and Richard Stavig. The members then passed a motion recommending that an effort be made by the Society to collect and edit another volume of essays or studies on Melville similar to the *Moby-Dick Centennial Essays*, published by the Southern Methodist University Press. Interest was also expressed in sponsoring another conference like that held in the autumn of 1951 at Williams College.

By unanimous vote, the annual dues remain the same ($2 for active membership). Nathalia Wright was elected a member of the Executive Committe for a five-year term expiring in 1958.

Because of an unfortunate mix-up in correspondence, no action was taken at the meeting to select a president for the year 1954. William H. Gilman, who was originally scheduled to serve in this capacity, has withdrawn. Some step to fill the vacancy was to have been taken at the meeting. Lacking any official action of the membership, and after consideration of the matter by the Executive Committee, Walter E. Bezanson has consented to act as president for the current year and to make plans for a meeting in New York City during the coming winter. The Executive Committee as now constituted includes the following: Merton M. Sealts (1954), Walter E. Bezanson (1956), Harrison Hayford (1957), and Nathalia Wright (1958). Tyrus Hillway continues to serve as secretary (three-year term expiring in 1954). Any change in these arrangements will probably have to await the annual meeting in December.

NOTES

Hugh W. Hetherington (University of Wyoming) is interested in locating undiscovered reviews and notices of Melville's works which appeared between January, 1846, and the end of 1857—reviews which have not been mentioned either in Jay Leyda's *The Melville Log* or in Hetherington's chapter in the *Moby-Dick Centennial Essays*. He will appreciate any leads which members may send him.

Plans are in process for a complete volume on Melville's contemporaneous reputation.

William Bysshe Stein has been awarded a Bolligen fellowship for the next three years to study Melville's poetry and its imagery. He will make a thorough examination of the manuscripts in the Harvard Library this summer and hopes to prepare a critical edition of the later poems. He will study in detail the thematic ramifications of Melville's "rose" imagery and its connection with the later prose as well as the poetry.

Ralph Brinton, art director of the Associated British Picture Corporation, Ltd., which is planning to produce *Moby-Dick* as a motion picture under the direction of John Huston, is in search of the following photographs or drawings: views of New Bedford, Massachusetts, and the surrounding countryside about the year 1840; views of the New Bedford streets and harbors, same period; views of the Seamen's Bethel at New Bedford, interior and exterior, same period; views of American whaling ships of Melville's day.

It has been suggested that the Society might sponsor and edit (through an editorial committee) a book of studies on *Melville's Later Years* (i.e. after 1856). At least seven Melville scholars have recently been working on various topics of study connected with those years. Comments of our members are invited, together with ideas as to publishers who might be interested.

Melville's "Bartleby" was presented on Sir Laurence Oliver's "Theatre Royal" radio program over stations of the National Broadcasting Company on Sunday evening, February 14. Lionel Merton played the title role, MacDonald Park was Turkey, and other players included Charles Irving and Lois McClain.

Work on the Melville Bibliography for 1952-1953 is progressing, according to word received from Stuart C. Sherman, and it is hoped that copies will be available soon. The previous annual bibliography was distributed to all active members, and it seems likely that a similar distribution can be made this year. Besides Mr. Sherman, others who are working on the project include John H. Birss and Gordon Roper.

Walter E. Bezanson is author of a paper entitled "Melville's Reading of Arnold's Poetry," which will be published in the June issue of *PMLA*.

Benjamin H. Sanborn & Company (221 East 20th Street, Chicago 16, Illinois) publishes an abridged and simplified version of *Moby-Dick* for sixth and seventh graders.

One of the most interesting floats in the Festival of Roses parade in Pasadena, California, on last New Year's Day was the San Pedro Fishermen's Fiesta entry, which took first place in Class A-6. Made with many thousands of blue and white flowers, it represented Moby Dick, the great white whale, sporting in the ocean and surrounded by bathing beauties! The theme of the parade this year was "Famous Books in Flowers."

According to a previous announcement, *Moby-Dick* was to have been presented on television on the "Omnibus" hour (Columbia Broadcasting System), which has recently been discontinued. So far as the secretary has been able to discover, the dramatization was not given as planned. What future plans may be for this program have not yet been determined. The program was offered on Sunday afternoons.

The secretary would be pleased to hear from our members about Melville studies in progress, forthcoming publications, and activities of interest to other members. There is room in the Newsletter also for brief scholarly notes and comments (including explications) and for queries and answers. The Newsletter, however, makes no pretense of usurping the province of any scholarly journal already in the field. Its chief purpose is to distribute *news* about persons and events in Melville scholarship.

Notices of dues for 1954 are included with the present issue of the Newsletter ($2 for active membership, $1 for associate membership). Back numbers of the Newsletter, beginning with Volume V (1949) are still available at 15 cents each. At the request of any present member, the secretary will be glad to send a sample copy of the Newsletter to any person interested in the possibility of joining the Society.

THE *Melville Society* NEWSLETTER IS PUBLISHED QUARTERLY FOR MEMBERS OF THE Melville Society, a group of literary scholars and others interested in the life and works of Herman Melville. The Society seeks to facilitate the exchange of information among its members, to stimulate the study of Melville's life and works, and to encourage literary, historical, and bibliographical research. Membership is two dollars per year and includes all services of the Society. Associate membership (non-voting) is one dollar per year and includes all issues of the Newsletter. Address Tyrus Hillway, secretary, at Colorado State College, Greeley, Colorado.